

- Sign up for the local school district's emails and/or text alerts. This will help you prepare for days when school is cancelled or released early because of the weather.
- Download a weather app. This will help you know what the current weather conditions are in your area. Many of the apps also share information on how safe the weather is based on temperature and conditions.
- Sign up for emergency alerts through [ready.gov](http://ready.gov).



Issue 2023-1

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## Central Office Corner

## Playground Inspections

**For child care centers**, rule R400.8170(11) requires the playground equipment, use zones, and surfacing in the outdoor play area must be inspected by a certified playground safety inspector and an approval granted for playground equipment and areas used before issuance of an original license, upon request of the department, and before using any newly added playground equipment. The center shall provide documentation of the inspection to the department upon request and shall keep it on file at the center.

Please utilize the following link on the Child Care Licensing Bureau website to find a list of certified playground safety inspectors [Playground Inspections \(michigan.gov\)](#). Included is a [list of certified CPSIs](#).

When a playground inspection is completed, the CPSI will provide the center a report of the inspection. The CPSI must also complete the [Playground Inspection Certification Summary](#) (BCAL-5047) and provide it to the center. The center must maintain a copy of this form on file at the center as documentation of compliance with this rule.

**For child family and group homes,** please note that although the outdoor play area does not require a certified playground inspection, the licensee or child care staff member should conduct a survey of the outdoor play area before each use.

Hazards to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Busy roads and streets, railroad tracks.
- Water hazards.
- Glass or sharp objects.
- Splintered, cracked or deteriorating wood.
- Protruding bolt ends with missing caps or covers.
- Loose bolts and nuts on equipment.
- Holes or ditches.
- Broken play equipment.
- Animal feces, beehives, wasp nests, or ant hills.
- Toxic plants.
- General clutter or debris, such as piles of wood or brush, scrap metal, junk cars, or machinery.

When a hazard is located in or near the play area, the hazard must be removed or protected. Protection can be provided by the use of a natural or man-made barrier, enclosure or other protective covering (e.g., a fence, wall, building, hedge, cover, etc.).



## Highlighted Rule of the Month – Outdoor Play

### Home Rules

#### R400.1914(3)(b)

#### Daily activity program.

(3) All of the following developmentally appropriate opportunities must be provided daily:

(b) Indoor and outdoor play, except during inclement or extreme weather, or unless otherwise ordered by a health care provider.

### Technical Assistance

The caregiver is responsible and accountable for assuring that:

- All children, including infants, are taken outside on a daily basis as weather permits.
- Children do not become overheated or excessively chilled.
- A child is properly supervised if he/she has a written order signed by a health care provider to remain inside.

Technical assistance to help comply with these rules can be found [here](#).

### Center Rules

#### R 400.8170(3)

#### Outdoor play area.

(3) A center operating with children in attendance for 3 or more continuous hours per day shall provide daily outdoor play, unless prevented by inclement weather or other weather conditions that could result in children becoming overheated or excessively chilled.

### Technical Assistance

The center is responsible and accountable for assuring that:

- All children, including infants, are taken outside on a daily basis as weather permits.
- Children do not become overheated or excessively chilled.

The center must ensure a child is properly supervised while indoors if the center is going to make special accommodations for a child with a written and signed order by a health care provider to remain inside.

Technical assistance to help comply with these rules can be found [here](#).

# CHILD CARE LICENSING UPDATES

The outdoor play area is an extension of learning for children as it provides for opportunities such as exploration, team work, and small and large motor development. Green spaces and outdoor play areas bring measurable benefits for children both in physical activity and mental health. The Administrative Rules for Family and Group Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers requires facilities provide daily outdoor play, unless prevented by inclement weather.

In developing an outdoor play program, some facilities adopt a nature based program or use a natural playground. Interest in nature based programs has grown across the country, particularly since the coronavirus pandemic. Typically, these programs use nature as a classroom environment for children to explore. The outdoor play area of a natural playground blends natural materials. Other facilities choose to provide play equipment such as jumping ropes, hula-hoops, and balls, or climbing equipment.

Creating an outdoor play area, whether a natural playground or a playground with equipment, can seem a bit overwhelming. Here are a few resources that may help you:

### Resources:

[Rethinking Outdoor Space for High-Quality Early Learning \(newamerica.org\)](#)

[Outdoor Learning Environment Action Plan](#)

[Community Asset Mapping Worksheet](#)

[Critical Site Decisions](#)

[Outdoor Play & Learning Environment Activity Settings and Components](#)

(continued)

# CHILD CARE LICENSING UPDATES (CONTINUED)

## [How to Guides](#)

[Outdoor Play with Infants and Toddlers](#)

[Winter Play Tips & Tricks](#)

[Nature Play at Home](#)

[Outdoor Learning Environment Infosheets](#)

## ***Grant Opportunities:***

The Facilities Improvement Fund is a grant opportunity through Caring For MI Future that may help available if you are a(n):

- Newly licensed providers whose licenses have been issued on or after May 1, 2022.
- Existing providers who have expanded their licensed capacity as of May 1, 2022.
- Existing providers who are currently in the process of expanding their licensed capacity.
- Licensed family child care homes or group child care homes with an approved capacity variance from Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA).

More information about this grant opportunity, including eligibility criteria can be found [at Caring for MI Future \(michigan.gov\)](#).

## The Importance of Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an important part of childhood; it provides opportunities for children to develop gross and fine motor skills. When children play outdoors, they increase their physical coordination. Not only does outdoor play make children more physically fit, but it also allows for exploration, risk taking, conflict resolution, and social interaction. This makes outdoor play critical to a child's overall development.

Outdoor activities are more open-ended than indoor experiences and allow children to use their whole bodies to learn more about the world around them. It allows children to engage in messy and loud play that might not be appropriate indoors.

We know that colds, flu, and illnesses are caused by viruses and bacteria, not by outdoor play in the winter. Children who remain inside a warm, stuffy room all winter have a greater chance of exposure to the germs and illnesses trapped in there. Daily outdoor play allows for the viruses and bacteria to be dispersed into a larger air space, thus decreasing the risk of illness. Frequent exposure to daily fresh air and exercise improves a child's general health and increases his or her resistance to illness and infection.

Daily outdoor play for children of all ages is a licensing requirement for child care homes and centers. All children, including infants, must be taken outside daily, weather permitting. Investing in a stroller is a great way to get infants and toddlers outside for fresh air, even if for a short period of time.

According to the American Heart Association, children should have at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day, including play and structured activities. Learn more at [Heart.org/lifes8](https://heart.org/lifes8).

Daily outdoor play can:

- Relieve/reduce stress and anxiety.
- Increase coordination.
- Build muscles, strength, and endurance.
- Promote leadership skills.
- Increase self-confidence.
- Enhance language and social skills.
- Promote exploration of the environment.

Outdoor play promotes happy, healthy children who rest better and have fewer disagreements with others. It gives children an opportunity to explore the environment while developing new skills.



# CHILD CARE LICENSING BUREAU AND LICENSEE PARTNERSHIPS

*Licensing consultants and licensees partner together to ensure programs and facilities meet state requirements and provide children in care a safe environment and enriching programming. There are times when the licensing consultant and licensee need to work closely together on a tough issue to create a positive outcome. MCCM will highlight one of these partnerships in each issue by sharing an interview between licensing and a licensee.*

***Below is an interview between licensing consultant Charnell Lenox and licensee, Tonya Billington. This interview highlights the collaboration between licensing and a licensee designee resolving an Environmental Health Inspection issue.***

## **Sharkey, Jackie (LARA)**

Licensee Tonya Billington and Licensing Consultant Charnell Lennox are here today to discuss how they worked together to resolve an issue with the Environmental Health inspection that was required to open Tonya's family child care home.

Charnell, tell me how you learned of the environmental health issue and why it needed to be resolved before the license could be issued.

## **Lennox, Charnell (LARA)**

I received notice from the health department. I believe Tonya actually forwarded the report. During her initial inspection, she had some bacteria, so they did what they needed to do to resolve this. Tonya did what she needed to do to plunge the well and then have it reinspected. And it was the reinspection that I received and saw that there was a B rating instead of an A rating. So, I reached out to Tonya and said, you know, per the rules, we have to have an A rating.

There was nothing unsafe with her water. It was simply that with her older home; she lives in a beautiful old farmhouse, and it is a common problem in my area, especially the well and the septic, were just too close together by 10 feet per code. Code requires that the well and septic be 50 feet away from each other, and Tonya's was 40 feet away.

## **Sharkey, Jackie (LARA)**

Thank you. What steps did you take to help resolve the issue?

## **Lennox, Charnell (LARA)**

Well, I let Tonya know that I could submit a variance request for this rule. I believe it was Rule 1933, which is the rule that requires that A rating. I said we could come up with a plan to figure out how we could possibly get this variance to go through. Part of that was contacting the Environmental Health Specialist who did the inspection. He said, you know, this comes up a lot for restaurants, and what we have restaurants do is we have them test their own water quarterly and then I believe restaurant licenses are renewed every year.

So, upon quarterly testing and then upon renewal the health department comes back out and does their own water sampling just to make sure that 10 feet is not really interfering with anything. I reached out to Tonya and said, you know, does this sound like a feasible plan? Can we do this?

Because I can put in the variance that the health department supports, and they did support a variance request for this as well. They said the water is not unsafe, it's simply that the code that requires 10 extra feet apart from each other.

With the health department on board, and with Tonya on board, I wrote up a variance request explaining the agreement between all the parties and submitted it. Tonya actually had to submit the request in writing first to us that she would like a variance for that rule.

## **Sharkey, Jackie (LARA)**

Great. Thank you.

Tonya, what was it like to hear the news of what you had to do and what you had to do on your end.

## **Tonya Billington**

Well, first of all, sure panic because I thought we were going to have to either dig a new well or move our septic. So, granted, the first initial reaction - I was very scared. Thinking, how am I going to do this to open my daycare that I've had for 18 years, but thankfully, Charnell, had this idea with the health department about doing the variance, about testing my water every three months, which we were more than happy to do. That's not a problem, you know, to make sure the water is safe for my husband and me, and for the children. We want to make sure it's safe. So, we have no problem with doing that whatsoever. But without Charnelle's help, I mean due diligence, to try to rectify my problem, I probably would never have been able to reopen because there's no way, financially, we could have done a new well or moved our septic. This just wasn't feasible for us, so we're very grateful Charnell's help.

*"...without Charnelle's help, I mean due diligence, to try to rectify my problem, I probably would never have been able to reopen because there's no way, financially, we could have done a new well or moved our septic. This just wasn't feasible for us, so we're very grateful Charnell's help."*

- Tonya Billington, Licensee

### Sharkey, Jackie (LARA)

Yes, that that was very quick. So, Charnell was able to ease any concerns that you had about the finding and you needed to proceed?

### Tonya Billington

She certainly was. Yes. Without her, I would have been a basket case because I was just all stressed, and with the holidays, too. Now just one more thing to have to try to deal with. But, yes, she made it as smooth as she possibly could, stress free. And we got the outcome that we needed.

Sounds like the whole process was pretty easy and went very smoothly.

Charnell and Tonya, thank you so much for working together to have this great resolution. It was very positive to be able to get the license opened as quickly as possible.

### Tonya Billington

Yes!

## GET TO KNOW US – QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Ever wonder about child care licensing staff outside of work? Get to know the staff with a fun question each month.

*What is your favorite winter outdoor activity?*



#### Codie Mayhew – Northwest Region

- I enjoy snowmobiling in northern Michigan.



#### Stacy Tomczak – Gaylord Region

- My favorite winter outdoor activity is cross country skiing and hiking with my dog.



#### Michelle Gleed – South Central Region

- Sledding with the grandchildren, followed by hot cocoa and a cozy blanket.



#### Mary Smith – Gaylord Region

- My favorite winter activity is sledding! As a child my parents would take us to a park where I would go sledding for hours. I was always the last one in the car when it was time to go. I carried the tradition on by taking my son and his friends sledding. Now that he is grown and doesn't have children yet, I take my nephews. Who doesn't want to play in the snow and then drink hot cocoa afterwards to warm up?



#### Christine Noel – Flint/Macomb Region

- Researching and planning my next vacation on a sunny Caribbean island. 😊



#### Roxanne Duckworth – Southwest Region

- Growing up my family and I did a lot of outdoor winter activities, such as, ice hockey, ice-skating, cross-country skiing, sledding, ice fishing, and winter cabin trips. If I had to choose one, it would be going on winter cabin trips. I love the crisp cold air and peaceful silence on a walk in the woods in the fall and winter, and then cozying up to a warm fire when I return.



#### Bagvati Yedur – Pontiac Region

- My favorite activity during winter is traveling. I am always on the look-out for escaping the Michigan winter and finding warmer places around the globe to travel. I enjoy seeing new places and creating new memories.



#### Lalemma Hudnell – Grand Rapids Region

- Sledding with my kids and husband.